DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 241 159 PS 014 202

AUTHOR Hinitz, Blythe F.
TITLE History of Dance in Early Childhood Education, 1920-1970.
PUB DATE 24 Nov 80
NOTE 12p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (San Francisco, CA, November 24, 1980).
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (120) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Dance Education; *Early Childhood Education; *Educational History; *Movement Education
IDENTIFIERS *Twentieth Century

ABSTRACT

Highlights of the historical development of structured and creative/free dance experiences for children within the curriculum of early childhood education in the 20th century are sketched. Although some educators dissented with the practice, in the 1920s most dance activities for young children were structured. The following decade was characterized by a gradual shift toward freedom of movement and a recognition of individual rhythms. In the 1940s, during World War II, there was a hiatus in developing new creative movement programs. The 1950s brought an emphasis on freedom of movement that extended to the nursery school level. Exchange of ideas between early childhood educators and dance educators began to increase during the 1960s. In the 1960s and early 1970s, dance experiences were characterized by freedom combined with a small amount of structure. Presently, early childhood and physical educators agree with the idea that movement (1) plays an integrated part in the curriculum for the young child; and (2) should be construed as a way of knowing, finding out, testing, and expressing oneself that is reciprocally and causally linked with feelings. (RH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

ED241159

HISTORY OF DANCE IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION 1920-1970

Paper presented by:

Dr. Blythe F. Hinitz
Assistant Professor, Early Childhood Education
Trenton State College
Trenton, New Jersey

1980 Annual Conference
National Association for the Education
of Young Children
November 24, 1980
San Francisco, California

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Blythe F. Hinitz

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

PS 014202

HISTORY OF DANCE IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION 1920-1970

Creative dance is the guided exploration of movement concepts, designed to increase the child's awareness and understanding of his own range of movement and that of others. It is offered as a pre-dance, pre-sport movement experience, one in which the child is the center, and creative involvement and challenge are part of each experiencce.

Creative movement has flourished within Early Childhood Education because children are movers from before their birth and movement is an innate part of their livess, until it is stifled. Creative movement has been a part of early childhood curriculum from the inception of early childhood programs in the United States during the 1850's, up until the present time. This paper highlights the shift from structure to freedom within creative movement that took place as the number of early childhood education programs in this country increased, and the programs were diversified. **Structure** refers to programs in which the child conforms to set patterns and the movement experiences fall within a very rigid framework. **Freedom** refers to programs in which children initiate the movement based upon their own discoveries, and the children are encouraged to solve problems that are posed by the teacher. They are encouraged to solve them in different ways, ways different from each other, and ways different from the teacher. The movement experiences in early childhood programs are divided into structured exxperiences, such as set games or folk dances, and the free experiences, which I call creative movement. I am going to sketch for you some of the highlights of

the development of both types of experiences within early childhood education in the last century, starting with the 1920's.

In the 1920's there existed mostly structured programs. There were a few people who were in the opposition, however the majority of educators were structured in their thinking. The majority of books in the field published at that time were compilations of pantomimes and folk dances. In reviewing them, one discovers a full page picture on one side showing exactly what the children were supposed to look like when doing this activity and on the opposite side, step by step directions. Sometimes there would be music on the bottom of the page. There is one picture in my doctoral dissertation showing children rigidly marching two by two. This is supposed to be a dance. Shafter and Crawford, (1)(2) who published books durng the 1920's wrote in this structured vein. That is what was published, so that is what teachers used. There was some opposition. Early childhood educators in the 1920's. such as Pickett and Boren, (3) said that teachers shouldn't follow these "patterned drills" and they should not have "hand pattings" and arm movements demonstrated by the teacher. They felt that children should be encouraged to "do their own thing". The progressive educators who followed Dewey, such as Rugg and Shoemaker, (4) said that in the primary grades action songs and folk dances existed in the curriculum. However, as students went on to the higher elementary grades, even that type of movement experience dropped away. It wasn't considered important to have any kind of movement and dance experiences at that level and

above. Rugg and Shoemaker were opposed to body culture, Swedish gymnastics and ballet. These are some of the physical education experiences which would be given to certain elementary school children. They said the children should have "leaps and great strides and bounding with lifted foreheads and spreading their arms far", which is the creative aspect.

The major piece of research done at that time was conducted at the Iowa Child Welfare Research Station by Hulson. (5) It was an analytical study of the motor rhythm of children. Children's bodily responses were controlled by either verbal stimulation or music played at a particular tempo. In the verbal stimulation portion, the teacher would say, "Do this, do that". In the musical portion, one of the many tempos utilized was more easily adopted by the children. Christianson, (17) a person who received her doctoral degree at Teachers' College of Columbia University, and has written books in the field of early childhood education, was opposed to that method. In her description of the situation in the Teacher's College Nursery School, she states that the children would begin to move, and the teacher would provide an accompaniment. The accompaniment could be piano or singing. The tempo and rhythm came from the children and the teacher picked up on it, facilitating the experience.

In the 1930's we began to see a gradual shift toward freedom. One of the few studies that deals with kindergarten dance was done by a group of Philadelphia teachers, headed by Abbott (6).The study, which appeared in Childhood Education, said that every child has a rhythm peculiar to himself. It was one of the first times researchers talked about individual children's

movement as opposed to the group moving as a whole in patterned exercises. In the patterned exercises the entire group would do the same thing. Abbott said that two kinds of opportunities should be provided in the kindergarten, one for individual expression, and the second one, group movement play which grows out of the child to child responses when children have a common interest in some topic. The study also said that children should have large free untrammeled responses to music.

In the thirties, there was very little attention paid to movement activity of children between the ages of infancy and the time that they entered elementary school (18). Gessell's study on infancy, while it did not deal with particularly creative movement, did deal with motor movement. Physical education researchers talked about school age children. There were three studies which dealt with early childhood. They were: **Nancy Bayley's** study on the development of motor abilities, **Mary Gutridge's** study of the motor achievements of young children, and the work of **Florence Goodenough** which produced the "draw-a-man test", dealing with the interrelationships of motor abilities in young children. That is all there was at the time.

During the 1940's there was a hiatus in developing new creative movement programs because of the war. However, the programs that were in existence in whatever nursery schools remained did continue. Nothing really new happened at that time. As soon as the war was over dance educators began to publish books. In many cases they dealt with young children. For example, Mary O'Donnell (7) wrote a book in 1945 in which she expressed

her dissatisfaction with teachers who limited the subject matter that they used in movement periods to nursery rhymes, the farm yard and the zoo, all of which were considered to be sufficiently juvenile to be used with the children. She accused those people of damming the reserve of spontaneous and appropriate self expression by sticking to those topics.

In the 1950's there was an increased emhasis on freedom. **Gladys Andrews Fleming** (8) spoke about movement as a universal language of children. The first edition of her book was published in the 1950's. she said that large free movements were natural outlets for both thinking and feeling. This was one of the first instances in which a correlation was made among the types of development in relation to creative movement. She said that there was some relationship between cognitive and motor development,and between social-emotional and motor development.

Rhoda Kellogg (9) wrote an article in 1953 emphasizing freedom of movement in the nursery school. It is the only article I have found that specifically discusses the aim of dance in the nursery school, at that time. Kellogg felt that we should try to help children regain the capacities that were lost between infancy and the time they get to nursery school. We should encourage them to reach new achievements based on both their age level and their capacity for growth. We should allow them to grow as much as they possibly can.

Many of the authors I have read discussed the fact that young babies have marvelous movement potential, but they don't use their muscles and they are not encouraged to do so. The result of this lack of encouragement is that the potential is dammed up and

one must work very hard to overcome the barriers.

The opponents of whatever structure still existed continued to talk and write about those who believed in structure. **Emma Sheehy**, (10) another of the many dance and early childhood educators connected with Teachers' College of Columbia University, said that the structured approach asked teachers to require children to be rigid. One example Sheehy gave was that it is like giving a child paints and saying, "You may paint a house, you can paint any kind of house you like, but you must paint a house." Comparing this to movement, "You can do any kind of foot waving you want, but you must wave your foot." Teachers who believed in structure were constricting the parameters within which the child could move.

Hartley, Frank and Goldenson (11) did a classic study on children's play, which was published in 1952. They also talked about excessive control in the nursery school. In their observations of creative movement activities, they found teachers or phonograph records leading the "rhythm periods". The teachers would tell the children exactly which movements to do, or the children would be required to listen to and follow the record's instructions. This rigidity robs the "rhythms period" of its spontaneity, acording to the authors.

During the sixties and early seventies, major emphasis had shifted to freedom, with a little bit of structure. **Nancy McCormick Rambusch**, (12) a person who wrote about the Montessori method, said that conventional education had equated immobility with virtue and mobility with the worst of

progressivism. In other words, they said that progressivism was anarchy. If the child moved, it was terrible. The teachers would say to themselvess, "I have got to watch that one, he is moving." Rambusch said Montssori believed sensory-motor development is the foundation of conceptual learning. Piaget agreed with that statement. Motor thinking plays an important role in early childhood education, because children learn,in the beginning through movement. The trend toward total development through creative movement had many adherants during the sixties. The Barlins, a husband and wife team of dance educators, said that the total development of body, mind, emotions, imagination and enthusiasm leads to creative living and thinking. Early childhood educators, for instance, Margolin, (13) said we need to sharpen skills related to self expression in all art forms, because the skills are emotional and cognitive-intellectual, and they become translated into active and unique types of expression on the part of young children.

In the sixties there were a great many conferences. All of a sudden people "discovered" creative movement. National organizations would have joint conferences. For example, A.A.H.P.E.R.- A.C.E.I. and A.A.H.P.E.R.- N.A.E.Y.C. scheduled full day pre-conference sessions devoted entirely to creative movement and movement activities. At this point the exchange of ideas between early childhood educators and dance educators began to increase. Lydia Gerhardt (16) wrote an interestng study on the relationship of cognitive theory to creative movement, based on the work of Jean Piaget. In the forward to the book, Little says that the knowledge of curriculum for young chidren and the

process of knowing in education through body movement, and their interrelationships, are in the forefront of thinking in early childhood eduation. Gerhardt made the connection in her book, Moving and Knowing, the Young Child Orients Himself In Space. She said that physical exercise has long been recognized as crucial to the development of physical well being, but it is now (in 1973) being recognized as important in the development of self image. She discusses many aspects of the concept of self image. She says that the role of body movement in the development of conceptual abilities is in the process of being delineated and recognized for its importance. Unfortunately, she is one of the few people who put it down in writing. Many people talk about it, but somehow it does not get disseminated unless somebody writes it down. She is one of te few practitioners who did that.

Both early childhood and physical educators agree with the statement which Rose Mukerji made at the 1972 A.A.H.P.E.R.-N.A.E.Y.C. joint conference. Movement plays an integrated function in the curriculum of the young child because moving is a way of knowing...moving is a way of finding out...moving is a way of testing ourselves...moving is a way of expressing ourselves...movement creates feelings and...feelings create movment.

REFERENCES

1. Shafter. Dramatic Dances for Small Children. NY: Barnes Co., 1919.

2. Crawford, Caroline. Dramatic Games and Dances for Little Children. NY: Barnes Co., 1920.

3. Pickett and Boren. Early Childhood Education. Yonkers-on-Hudson,NY: World Book Co., 1924.

4. Rugg and Shumaker. The Child Centered School. Yonkers-on-Hudson,NY: World Book Co., 1928.

5. Hulsen. "Tempo in Rhythm for Young Children" in Childhood Education VI No.2 October, 1929, p.78.

6. Abbott. "Rhythmic Activity in the Kindergarten" in Childhood Education Part I - XII No.8 May, 1936. Part II - XII No.9 June, 1936.

7. O'Donnell. "Dance Accompaniment for Children" in JOHPER 17 No.8 October, 1946.

8. Andrews, Gladys. Creative Rhythmic Movement. NJ: Prentice Hall, 1954.

9. Kellogg, Rhoda. "Dance in the Nursery School" in Impulse 1953.

10. Sheehy, Emma. There's Music in Children NY: Holt 1952.

11. Hartley,Frank and Goldenson. Understanding Children's Play NY: Columbia University Press, 1952.

12. Rambusch, Nancy, M. Learning How to Learn. Baltimore,MD: Helicon Press, 1962.

13. Margolin, E. "Conservation of Self Expression and Aesthetic Sensitivity in Young Children" in Young Children XXII No.3 January, 1968 p. 155-60.

14. American Physical Education Association. Dancing in the Elementary Schools. NY: Barnes, 1933.

15. Fleming, Gladys Andrews. Children's Dance. Washington,D.C. American Association for Health, Physical Education and Recreation, 1973.

16. Gerhardt, Lydia. Moving and Knowing - The Child Orients Himself in Space. NJ: Prentice Hall, 1973.

17. Christianson. Bodily Rhythmic Movements of Young Children in Relation to Rhythm in Music. NY: Teachers' College,Columbia University, 1938.

18. Sinclair,Carolyn. Movement of the Young Child Ages 2-6. Columbus,OH: Charles E. Merrill, 1973.